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Steven Adam Sigmond

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APPROVED: Richard Merritt

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MEANINGS AND IMPLICATIONS
OF
THE 1980 ELECTION

BY

STEVEN ADAM SIGMOND

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

On November 4rth, 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected the 40th President of the United States. He received an overwhelming 489 electoral votes, one of the largest vote totals in history. This margin of victory has inspired ideas of new majority coalitions, ideological choices and mandates. I will argue that there has been no coalitional shift that would create a stable Republican majority, and that there has been no clear ideological choice in favor of Reagan's policies, but that dissatisfaction over Jimmy Carter's performance was the principal reason why Reagan was elected.

Ronald Reagan received 51% of the popular vote, to Jimmy Carter's 41%. Given that a victory of this size is not meaningless, we can interpret its meaning in two ways: retrospectively or prospectively. That is, we can consider the vote a reflection on the last four years or a prediction for the next four years. My contention is that the vote in 1980 was retrospective, and that no prospective implications can be attached to it. In other words, it was a vote against Carter, not for Reagan.

A prospective explanation for such a large victory might be that the electorate has simply made a clear choice. Such a line of reasoning would hold that the people had sized up the issue stances of the two parties and their candidates, choosen a winner, and thus voted a mandate. An explanation of this sort might be stated as follows:

> The emerging Republican majority spoke clearly (in the last election) for a shift away from the sociological jurisprudence, moral permisiveness,

> experimental residential, welfare and educational programming and massive federal spending by which the Liberal (mostly Democratic) Establishment sought to propogate liberal institutions and ideology.

The above analysis was provided by Kevin P. phillips in 1969, in explanation of the Republican victory in 1968. [2] Mr. Phillips was willing to infer several things based on that election. First, he assumes that an emerging majority can be detected from a single election. Second, he believes that a single election can represent a clear choice. Third, he implies that voting in presidential elections is directly related to issues such as supreme court decisions and congressional policies. I intend to assert that none of the above notions can be applied to the 1980 election.

The evidence does not support the notion that a clear ideological statement has been made. There is also not much evidence to support the idea of an emerging Republican majority. In the first section, I will show that the strengths of the Republican and Democratic coalitions were basically the same in 1980 as they have been for many years. The Republicans and the Democrats are still divided pretty much along the same lines that they were in the 1930's. Most of the changes that have occurred since then happened in the 1960's.

In the second section, I will look at the voting decision on an individual level. I will show that the political parties, although still a major factor, are of declining importance. I will then show that individuals do take issue differences

into account, but that issue choice was not the most prevalent reason for the vote. The most important factor was disapproval over Jimmy Carter's job as president. Voters were more likely to vote based on their evaluation of Carter than for any other reason. The only mandate that Ronald Reagan has is not to act too much like Jimmy Carter.

PART ONE: COALITIONS AND CRITICAL ELECTIONS

When analyzing elections, it is often difficult to think of the electorate as so many millions of individuals. It can often be very useful to classify the electorate according to such things as race, income, geographical location, age, religion and other criteria. Often, members of a group defined by the above criteria will tend to vote alike. Certain groups will often vote for one party more than the other. By analysing which groups vote for which party, we can determine where each party draws its support from. When a number of cohesive groups tend to vote for the same party again and again, those groups are refered to as that party's coalition.

In part one, I will discuss the 1980 election in the context of groups and coalitions. I will argue that the 1980 election does not signify the emergence of a majority Republican coalition; the strengths of the two coalitions are largely the same as they have been, with only minor movements. This is in keeping with the arguement that this election was only an evaluation of the past. An election where voters were choosing sides for the future would be characterized by a good deal of coalitional changes.

The Theory of Critical Elections

At times in our history, great majorities have voted together. Sometimes, these majorites represent only a great many divergent forces joined together for a moment in time. At other times, however, majorities are established based on solid bonds. Such majorities are made to last. If the 1980 election signifies the emergence of a new majority Republican coalition, then historians will look at the election of 1980 as a critical election.

The theory of critical elections holds that there are certain points in history when the party coalitions undergo rapid shifts. These shifts will be major, and they will turn out to be permanent in nature. They will lead to restructured coalitions, and sometimes, although not always, to a major change in the balance of power between the parites.

A critical election must find its roots in an issue, or set of issues, which divides the public. Often this issue will be a social disaster such as a depression or a war. It must be something that people will be willing to take sides on. When the people take sides, they will not be divided along the same political lines that they were previously. The new issue will cut across party lines, and new lines will be drawn up on that basis.[3] One major party will champion each side of the issue. The people will vote according to the new divisions, regardless of where they stood amongst the old divisions.

The theory of critical elections makes several assumptions about the nature of elections in America, and about the American

electorate. The assumptions go as follows: There is a gap between the expectations of the common people and the performance of those in government. That gap becomes larger as time goes by. That is, what people want and what government does becomes less and less similar. Government policy often has a tendency to become uniform and standardized. People's problems, on the other hand, change a great deal. The situation can be aggravated by emerging interests that government is not prepared to deal with, and by old and formerly ignored interests that have gained new social prominence. The people will realize that the government has stagnated, while the times have moved on. The majority coalition will then break up, and a new one will be formed by a champion who promises a brighter future.[4]

The critical elections model takes for granted a certain rationality and realism on the part of the average voter, at least for certain moments in time. They must first recognize that things are not going their way. They must then correctly analyze the source of their troubles. After that, they must decide upon the optimal course of action. Finally, they must act as a group in order to affect the desired change. If all those things happen, there will be a critcal election.[5]

There are several identifying characteristics of a critical election. These can be used to help us know one when we see one. There will be an increase in ideological polarization. This will begin within the parties. Normally, American political parties perform integration and aggregation of ideas, especially during the convention. This will not be the case in the year of a critical election. Instead, the conventions

will be marked by in-fighting and power struggles. There will be competition and polarization within the parties.[6]

Once each party has decided on a nominee, they will concentrate on the differences between the parties. Each party will champion an opposite point of view. In most election years, the issue stances of each major party candidate will move closer together as election day draws near.[7] In the year of a critical election, this will not be the case. The two parties will be polarized; issue distances will increase. The masses will respond to the polarization and take sides. There will be unusually high levels of political interest and voter turnout. When the votes are counted and analyzed, it will be determined that there has been a drastic departure from the voting patterns of the last several elections. A great many voters will have switched party allegiances. In the long run, it will be seen that these new allegiances were not just temporary cross-overs, but were permanent. Thus, the voters will have realigned, and a critical election will have occurred.

If a critical election had occurred in 1980, then that election might signify an emerging Republican majority. The evidence, however, does not support the thesis that a critical election took place in 1980.

Was There a Critical Election In 1980?

The two most important points about critical elections are that they bring about a great change in the allegiances of the electorate, and that the change they bring about is long-term. It is impossible to tell whether the changes brought by the 1980 election will be permanent. There has been a change in the holders of power, but I will present evidence that the long-term loyalties of the electorate were not greatly altered in 1980.

The best method of determining whether the last election was a critical election is to compare the identifying characteristics os a critical election with what actually happened. Such a comparison will refute the theory that a critical election took place in 1980.

The first characteristic of a critical election is polarization. This is supposed to begin within the parties. The Democratic party saw itself split in two. Incumbent President Jimmy Carter won his party's nomination only after a long and hard fight with Senator Kennedy. The Democratic primaries were a polarized struggle. The Republican primaries, on the other hand, were characterized by winnowing rather than polarization.

The idea of winnowing is simple. The ability to aquire resources will lead to initial success in the early primaries. Early success will enhance one's ability to raise funds. There is a snowballing effect. The reverse is also true. When one loses in the early primaries, it becomes hard to win later.

Therefore, whoever can jump out to an early lead will continue to build momentum, and broaden his lead, while all of the other candidates drop off. The more candidates there are initially, the faster this will happen.[8] Ronald Reagan's winning of the Republican nomination in 1980 consisted of winnowing.

Winnowing and polarization generally take place under different conditions. Winnowing will be more likely to occurr when there are a large number of candidates, and there is no clear favorite. Polarization is more likely to happen when there are exactly two strong candidates. If there are other candidates in the race, they are not of the calliber of the two main contenders. In a set of primaries characterized by winnowing, loyalties within the party will eventually all begin to flow in the same direction. When there is polarization, loyalties will eventually flow in opposite directions. In a party that is divided, it is far more likely that each side will choose their own candidate and polarize rather than choose the same candidate and winnow.

According to the theory, once each side has gotten their nominations over-with, polarization between the parties will be extreme. The two parties are to take differing stands on the issues, and the people are supposed to respond to those differences by taking sides. It is hard to measure the differences between the parties, but it is easy to measure whether people took sides. For the most part, they did not.

In table 1.1, on page 11, I have listed some of the evidence from the 1980 ICPSR poll. These statistics indicate that the public was not polarized. Section A summarizes the responses

TABLE 1.1

LEVELS OF POLARIZATION IN 1980

Section A

Which party will be better able to handle our problems?

Inflation		Unemployment
13%	Democrats	18%
29%	Republicans	21%
51%	Same by both	55%
7%	Don't know	6%

Section B

Which party are you closer to?

Republicans	28%
Democrats	31%
Neither	41%

Section C

Are you a supporter of one of the political parties?

yes	40%
no	60%

Section D

Do parties confuse the issues of provide a clear choice?

They confuse more	56%
Neutral	21%
They provide a choice	23%

to two seperate questions, that asked, "Do you think inflation (unemployment) would be better handled by the Democrats, the Republicans, or about the same by both?[9] The results show that more than half of the respondents did not think one party could handle either situation better than the other. This is especially alarming in light of the fact that inflation was mentioned most often, and unemployment third most often, as our nation's most serious problem.[10] This hints that the people do not see the parties as dissimilar on some of the most important issues. If the parties are similar, it is not because they are each receiving overwhelming support for being the way they are. Sections B and C attest to that.[11]

Section D summarizes the responses to a question that states, "The parties do more to confuse the issues than to provide a clear choice on issues." Respondents are asked to rate the statement from one to seven, one being disagree very strongly and seven being agree very strongly.[11] If they responded one, two or three, I listed them in the bottom category. If the response was five, six or seven, I listed them in the top category. A response of four was considered neutral. The results can be interpreted to mean that the parties actually are making polarization more difficult, by confusing the issues that the people would have taken sides based on. This evidence effectively refutes the idea of a polarized electorate in 1980.

There are also supposed to be increased levels of voter turnout, and interest in the campaign, at the time of a critical election. In 1980, only 54% of those eligible to

did so. This represents the fifth consecutive presidential election in which turnout has decreased.[12] The 54% turnout is the third lowest percentage since the creation of the national party system in 1828.[13]

There does not seem to be any great increase in the level of voter-interest either. Table 1.2, on page 14, shows evidence that interest in the 1980 election was low both relatively and absolutely. Section A is taken from a question in the 1980 ICPSR poll which asks the following question. "Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been very much interested, somewhat interested or not much interested in the political campaign so far this year?"[14] Section B was taker from The Changing American Voter to provide some historical perspective.[15] Section C of table 1.2 list the responses to the question, "Generally speaking, would you say that you personally care a good deal about which party wins the presidential election this fall, or that you don't care very much which party wins?"[16] The results show just how uninterested the public was with the last presidential election.

We ahve seen that with the exception of Edward Kennedy's challenge of Jimmy Carter, the identifying characteristics of a critical election bare little resemblence to the circumstances of the 1980 election. By these standards, no critical election occurred in 1980.

TABLE 1.2

LEVELS OF INTEREST IN THE 1980 ELECTION

Section A

Historical levels of political interest

	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1972
very interested	37%	30%	38%	38%	39%	32%
not very interested	29%	31%	25%	25%	21%	27%

Section B

Levels of interest in 1980

very much interested	30%
somewhat interested	44%
not very interested	26%

Section C

How Much do you care which party wins?

care a good deal	57%
don't care very much	43%

Are We In A Period Of Critical Realignment?

A more interesting suggestion than the one that says we have had a critical election is the idea that we are in the midst of a period of critical realignment. This seems more probable than the idea of a critical election. It is also harder to verify.

The end result of a critical realignment period is the same as that of a critical realigning election; a new coalition of voters will be formed which may be large enough and stable enough to win elections for many years to come. The difference is that during a critical realignment period the changes will be more gradual. Such a realignment period may take up to a decade to complete.

To say that a critical election has taken place in 1980 is to say that a sudden change has already taken place. To say that we are in a period of realignment is to say that a major change is gradually taking place right now, and the 1980 election was only a part of that change.

Realignments occurred in the United States in the 1820's, the 1850's, the 1890's and the 1930's.[17] Because of the lack of data available for those years, it is difficult to be certain whether those realignments were the products of sudden critical elections, or if they took shape more gradually. There is reason to believe that these changes represent realignment periods, and that actual critical elections are very rare.

There is considerable evidence presented in The American Voter that voters aquire an allegiance to a party early in life.[18]

They also show evidence that a majority of voters never cross party lines in a presidential election.[19] If party allegiance amongst established voters is fairly solid, then all new coalitions must be based largely upon new voters. The voters entering the electorate would be the material available for new coalitions to be built with. The fact that new coalitions must be built from new voters would, in itself, limit the size of any such change in one election.[20] The concepts of realignments being based on new voters and of voters sticking to a party once they choose one would explain why realignments never occurr more frequently than once in a generation. Seldom is the span between realignments much more than a generation.

The occurrence of realignments in this country have always coincided with an influx of new voters. The changing suffrage laws in the 1820's not only provided a wave of new voters, but drastically changed the nature of the electorate. The realignment in the 1890's was preceeded by the reinstatement of the Southern states in 1876. Again, not only were there new voters, but they were of a different type. The realignment in the 1930's came after the extension of suffrage to women in the 1920's, and the continuing waves of immigrants throughout the first quarter of the century. Again, the nature of the electorate was drastically altered.[21] This might be considered evidence that realignments in our history have rested upon one side attracting new voters. It does not seem that these realignments were based on the electorate suddenly deciding that the party out of power could better serve their

problems and switching allegiances, as the critical elections model might have us believe.

Another important point about critical realignments is this; whereas there is usually a change in the party in power, this is not always the case. It is possible that after various portions of the population have changed allegiances, the relative strengths of the parties will have stayed the same. It is also possible that the party in power may emerge from a realignment period stronger than it was. This was the case with the realignment of the 1890's, which solidified the Republican base of support.[22] The Republican majority that elected Coolidge and Hoover in the 1920's was not comprised of the same elements as the Republican majority that elected Lincoln and Grant in the 1860's, but no stable Democratic majority coalition ever emerged between those two Republican coalitions.

More often in our history, a realignment has put a new party in power. The first two realignments in our history altered the strengths of the parties so much that in each case the party that had been in power (first the Federalists, then the Whigs) was utterly destroyed.[23] The realignment that brought Franklin D. Roosevelt to power in 1932 has effected national elections ever since. I will look at that realignment in greater detail.

The election of 1932 is often given as an example of a critical election. There is considerable evidence that 1932 was just the midpoint in a period of realignment that lasted roughly from 1928 to 1936. We often see the era portrayed

as a time when the voters suddenly realized that Roosevelt and his social welfare programs were what was needed to save the nation. Evidence presented in The Changing American Voter shows that the increase in Democratic identification was gradual and long-term.[24] This is illustrated by graph 1.1, on page 19. The nation did not suddenly become Democratic in 1932.

Perhaps the largest factor in the realignment was the mobilization of potential Democrtats who previously had not voted. Table 1.3, below, taken from The Changing American Voter, illustrates this point.[25] The population had tilted towards the Democrats for many years. The key to success for the Democrats lied in getting people out to the polls.

TABLE 1.3

Mobilization of the Democrats (1920-1936)

	1920	1924	1928	1932	1936
Democratic voters	14%	16%	20%	26%	33%
potential Democrats not voting	34%	34%	32%	25%	20%

(percentage of the entire population)

Whatever the reasons for the realignment, th results are certain. By 1936, we had a population divided along class lines. The Democratic coalition of labor, social, ethnic and religious minorities, and most other low income groups formed a large majority of those identifying with anything at all.[26] By 1936, these divisions were permanent. The coalitions began to stabilize. Many wealthy voters switched to the Republican

GRAPH 1.1

PARTY IDENTIFICATION
(1930-1980)

Democrat

Realignment + Stabilization

Republican

Independent

55%
50%
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%

1930 '34 '38 '42 '36 '40 '44 '48 '52 '56 '60 '64 '68 '72 '76 '80

YEAR

party.[27] For instance, 50% of those who had voted Democratic in 1932, but wanted less government regulation switched and voted Republican in 1936.[28]

In a period of realignment such as the one that occurred in this country between 1928 and 1936, there is a certain type of political climate:

> Political conflict was more intense and harsher, the difference between the parties wider and clearer than at any time in the recollection of most voters. Partisan opponents were more than just competitors for power; they were the enemy. Economic questions became issues of morality, cast in terms of good and evil, right and wrong. Little room was left for political independence, or neutrality. People had to decide where they stood, and with whom. And they did. Millions of new voters entering the electorate had no doubt which party they adhered to, and established voters were forced to reconsider their allegiance. Most of those who joined, or changed parties in that period did so for life.[29]

The above passage is more than just a good description of what was going on in the thirties. It contains many of the identifying characterisics of a period of critical realignment. There is no quantitative method for checking whether we are in the midst of a period of realignment. As with a critical election, one needs some hindsight to evaluate a realignment period. Discovering a realignment period would be harder than

discovering a critical election. If we had had a critical election, it would now be over. If we are in the midst of a realignment period, it would still be going on. I can attempt to measure whether we are in a realignment period the same way I checked for a critical election. I can compare the identifying characteristics with the circumstances of the day. Such a comparison will lead me to the same conclusion I reached earlier, that nothing is going on, I reach this same conclusion for many of the same reasons.

The atmosphere of intensity, the feeling that one must decide where one stands, these things are missing from today's political climate. I have already discussed the low levels of interest and the lack of polarization. Partisan opponents certainly are not the enemy. Section A of table 1.4 attests to that.[30] Sixty percent of the respondents could not think of anything they didn't like about each of the parties. Not only is the public not responding to the differences between the parties, but as section B of table 1.4 shows, only 58% of them even recognize that those differences exist.[31] Sections C and D deal with important economic questions.[32] Economic questions are no longer "issues of morality, cast in terms of good and evil, right and wrong." They are no issues of apathy, cast in terms of "I don't know" and "I don't care."

I have discussed how realignments are based on new voters. In 1980, the new voters voted about the same as the old voters. Of those people who did not vote in 1976, 50% voted for Reagan, and 43% voted for Carter.[33] Of those who had never voted in a presidential election before, 46% voted for Reagan, and

TABLE 1.4

THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN 1980

Section A

"Is there anything in particular that you...

Like about the Democratic Party?"		Don't like about the Democratic Party?"	
yes	51%	yes	40%
no	49%	no	60%
Like about the Republican Party?"		**Don't like about the Republican Party?"**	
yes	37%	yes	40%
no	63%	no	60%

Section B

Are there differences in what the parties stand for?

yes	58%
no	34%
don't know	8%

Section C

Do you have an opinion on the tax cut?

have opinion	64%
haven't thought about it	27%
don't know	9%

Section D

Reduce unemployment at the risk of increasing inflation or vise-versa?

have opinion	59%
haven't thought about it much	27%
don't know	14%

35% voted for Carter.[34] These figures are not much different from the population as a whole.

Whereas a critical election and a period of realignment are different, they are made up of the same basic ingredients. Perhaps a critical election requires a stronger dose to make things happen faster. But each fuels itself on the same things: intensity, polarization and turnout. If there were moderate levels of each, perhaps we could say that there has been no critical election, but maybe we are in a realignment period. The levels of the necessary ingredients are so low that the suggestion that we are in a realignment period seems nearly as unlikely as the suggestion that we have had a critical election.

If solid evidence of a critical election, or a period of realignment, would have been found, this would have been a good argument against my thesis. It could have meant that the populace was realigning based on a positive choice for the present and the future. This evidence, however, was not found. This is supportive of my view that only a retrospective evaluation has been made, and that nothing has happened that would effect anyone's future loyalties and thus effect the coalitions. I will now turn to an analysis of the present state of the coalitions. I intend to show that the coalitions actually have not been effected.

The Present State Of The Coalitions

Thus far, in examining the effect of the 1980 election on the party coalitions, I have discussed the theories of critical elections and of realignment periods. These are the two most widely accepted theories of how coalitions change. I have presented evidence that neither are taking place or have taken place in 1980. I will now examine the present state of the coaltions. I will present alternative explanations for the present state of the coalitions. The data will not lead to a clear conclusion as to which of the explanations is correct, but it will clearly show that neither the strengths of the coalitions, nor the patterns of change were greatly altered by the 1980 election. The main point I wish to make is that there has not been a great deal of change.

Explanations of the current state of party coalitions generally fall into three categories. One says that we have already undergone realignment. Another says that we are in a prelude to a realignment. The third argues that both coalitions are falling victim to a process of dealignment.

According to the first explanation, the coalitions realigned during the 1960's. The net effect of the realignment was to leave the relative strengths of the parties about the same as they were. Because of this, the shift was largely ignored. Nevertheless, each side has gained and lost different segments of the electorate, leaving both coalitions very different than they were twenty years ago. John Petrocik makes this arguement in his book entitled Party Coalitions

> It is the thesis of this book that the party system has undergone a major realignment over the past ten or fifteen years. Its contours are not as gross as expected, and for that reason the change has been misidentified and even overlooked.[35]

Gerald Pomper also argues that there has been a realignment, but he gives a different version of what happened. Pomper wrote in 1972 that a critical election had taken place in 1964.[36] If either Pomper or Petrocik is correct, then we would expect the shifting to be over by now. Historically, realignments have always been about thirty years apart. Therefore, if there was realignment in the sixties, we would expect the coalitions to remain fairly stable in the eighties.

An alternative explanation is that we are in a prelude period. This explanation says that both party coalitions are breaking apart. This is what accounts for the high number of voters who classify themselves as independents today. If this explanation is true, then the trend towards the center will soon be reversed, and polarization will begin. People will soon choose up sides along lines and based on issues which have not yet become apparent. When the polarization takes place the prelude will be over. A period of realignment, or a critical election will follow.

Another explanation of the present state of the coalitions is that we are in the midst of a long-term trend of dealignment. This would be due to a lack of support for either party or for the party system in general. This view holds that people

continues to become independent because neither party can offer them viable solutions to their problems. The parties have become too similar and too ineffective.

If my thesis is false, and the 1980 election did represent a clear choice for the future with long-term coalitional implications, then it is doubtful that any of the three explanations could be true. If there was a realignment in the sixties, then it is unlikely that another one would occur this soon. Although periodicity is not a part of the theory of critical elections, there has been a set pattern of one occurring every thirty to fourty years. If there was a realignment in the sixties, and if we assume that the pattern will hold, then we would now be in a period of stabilization, with few new choices being made. If we were in a prelude, then the coalitions would currently be in a state of decay. The new issues upon which the new realignment would be built would not yet have surfaced. There would be nothing substantial enough for voters to make choices about. If we are simply going through dealignment, then realignment at the same time would be impossible. If it is true that neither party can offer viable solutions, then it is safe to say that the electorate could not make a clear choice in favor of one of the parties. The sum of all of this is that support for any one of the three alternative explanations is support for my thesis, because all of the three are incompatible with the negation of my thesis.

Suppose we examine these alternatitives. The simplest method of determining who is in which coalition is to look at the vote itself. Robert Axelrod has divised an excellent method for determining the contibution a segment of the electorate

makes to a party's vote total. He multiplies the size of the group, the group turnout, and the group loyalty to the party, then divides by the national turnout time the national loyalty to that party. He then arrives at the group's contribution. The contribution represents the proportion of that party's vote that came from that group. The sum of all the contributions will not add up to 100%, since the groups used are both non-exhaustive and overlapping.[37] Table 1.5 is a reproduction of Axelrod's numerical breakdown of the Democratic coalition for every presidential election since 1952. Table 1.6 gives the Republican version of the same. Some good points about Axelrod's method are that it allows one to trace the relative importance of a group across time, and it gives one a chance to see how the changes have come about.

We can see that the largest contribution to the Democratic vote is made by the South. Their percent contribution has nearly doubled since 1952. A closer look shows that the increase is due to the increased size of the Southern electorate and greatly increased turnout in the region. The loyalty of the South has fallen off over the years. This points out a major flaw in Axelrod's method. A large group that votes in good numbers may be a large percentage contributor to the party even while that group votes for that party less often. Recognizing this, Axelrod includes a table of percentage deviation. We see by looking at that table that the South has tilted towards the Republicans in three of the last five elections. Thus, even though the South's contribution to the Democratic vote has been steadily growing, the South cannot be considered a member of the Democratic coalition if we use who they v for as the

Table 1. The Democratic Coalition, 1952–1980

Year	Percentage Contribution = P	B	U	C	S	CC	Size × P	B	U	C	S	CC	Turnout × P	B	U	C	S	CC	Loyalty ÷ P	B	U	C	S	CC	(NT×NL) NT	NL
1952	28	7	38	41	20	21	36	10	27	26	28	16	46	23	66	76	35	68	47	83	59	57	55	51	63	44.4
1956	19	5	36	38	23	19	25	9	26	25	29	14	40	23	64	72	39	63	47	68	55	53	52	55	60	42.0
1960	16	7	31	47	27	19	23	10	25	25	23	13	46	31	60	74	50	74	48	72	66	82	52	65	64	49.7
1964	15	12	32	36	21	15	19	11	23	26	28	12	45	42	69	72	49	65	69	99	80	75	58	74	63	51.1
1968	12	19	28	40	24	14	16	11	24	26	31	10	44	51	61	68	53	63	44	92	51	61	39	58	62	42.7
1972	10	22	32	43	25	14	12	11	25	31	34	8	37	47	58	65	44	60	45	86	45	45	36	61	56	37.5
1976	7	16	33	35	36	11	9	11	23	30	32	8	32	44	62	55	57	58	67	88	63	57	53	61	54	50.1
1980	5	22	32	32	39	12	5	12	25	31	34	8	31	46	53	52	52	57	71	84	50	44	47	67	59	44.0
Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

P poor (income under $3,000/yr. ≤ $5,000/yr. in 1980)
B Black (and other nonwhite)
U union member (or union member in family)
C Catholic (and other non-Protestant)
S South (including border states)
CC central cities (of 12 largest metropolitan areas)
NT National turnout
NL National loyalty to Democrats

Year	Percentage Deviation in Loyalty to Democrats P	B	U	C	S	CC
1952	+2	+38	+14	+12	+10	+ 6
1956	+5	+26	+13	+11	+10	+13
1960	−2	+22	+16	+32	+ 2	+15
1964	+8	+38	+19	+14	− 3	+13
1968	+1	+49	+ 8	+18	− 4	+15
1972	+8	+49	+ 8	+ 8	− 2	+24
1976	+17	+38	+13	+ 7	+ 3	+10
1980	+ 2	+47	+ 9	+ 3	+ 6	+28
Column	27	28	29	30	31	32

Table 2. The Republican Coalition, 1952–19[illegible]

Year	Percentage Constituency (a)						Size (b)						Turnout (c)						Loyalty) (d)						+ (NT × NL)	
	NP	W	NU	P	N	NCC	NP	W	NU	P	N	NCC	NP	W	NU	P	N	NCC	NP	W	NU	P	N	NCC	NT	NL
1952	75	90	79	75	87	84	64	90	73	74	72	84	72	67	61	58	73	61	56	57	61	61	57	57	63	55.1
1956	84	98	78	75	84	89	75	91	76	75	71	86	67	64	58	56	69	60	59	59	63	62	60	60	60	57.4
1960	85	97	84	90	75	90	77	90	75	75	66	87	70	68	65	61	71	63	50	51	55	63	50	52	64	49.5
1964	80	100	87	80	76	91	81	89	77	74	72	88	67	66	61	60	68	63	40	42	45	44	38	40	63	38.5
1968	90	99	81	80	88	92	84	88	76	74	69	90	65	63	62	60	66	62	44	47	46	49	47	45	62	43.4
1972	93	98	77	70	73	95	88	88	75	69	66	92	58	57	55	53	62	55	61	66	63	65	60	63	56	60.7
1976	97	99	88	76	67	96	91	89	77	70	68	92	56	56	52	54	53	54	49	52	52	53	49	49	54	48.0
1980	99	99	91	74	67	97	95	92	73	69	65	92	55	55	53	55	55	55	52	54	55	54	51	53	54	50.7
Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

NP nonpoor (income over $3,000/yr.; $5000/yr in 1980)
W White
NU nonunion
P Protestant
N Northern (excluding border states)
NCC north central cities of 12 largest metropolitan areas
NT National turnout
NL National loyalty to Republicans

Year	Percentage Deviation in Loyalty to Republicans					
	NP	W	NU	P	N	NCC
1952	+1	+2	+6	+6	+6	+2
1956	+1	+1	+5	+4	+2	+2
1960	0	+1	+5	+13	0	+2
1964	+1	+3	+6	+5	−1	+1
1968	0	+3	+2	+5	+3	+1
1972	+1	+5	+3	+4	−1	+2
1976	+1	+5	+4	+5	+1	+1
1980	+1	+5	+5	+3	+1	+2
Column	27	28	29	30	31	32

standard.

We can see that the most meaningful gain the Democrats have made over the last thirty years has been with the blacks. Their loyalty to the Democrats has always been overwhelming. In aggregate, blacks voted Democratic at a rate of 56% in the fifties. During the seventies, blacks voted Democratic at a rate of 77%.[38] The figure for the eighties may be even higher. In 1980, with increased size and turnout, they contributed over one fifth of the Democratic vote. It is significant that the blacks are one of the only groups in either coalition that has run counter to the national trend of dwindling turnout.

The percentage contributions of the poor and those in the central cities have both fallen off sharply. A close inspection of the data will show that these two groups represent the opposite situation from that of the South. Their percentage contributions have decreased because the size and turnout of the groups have decreased. A glance at the percentage deviation in loyalty table will show that both of these groups have gone from close-to-neutral to extremely Democratic. Thus, these two groups can be considered a part of the Democratic coalition, even though their contributions are much smaller than that of the South. This shows again that the Axelrod method, although useful, can be deceptive.

Table 1.6, which is Axelrod's version of the Republican coalition, is much less informative. Look at the contribution of the non-poor. Over the years, that contribution has steadily increased, from 75% to 99%. This seems significant, however a look at the percentage deviation in loyalty table will show

that the non-peer have remained a virtually neutral group throughout. The rest of the table is just as uninteresting.

Axelrod's data shows that each parties votes in 1980 came from about the same sources as their votes in 1976 had come from. This is consistent with my point that there was not much change in the coalitional structures in 1980. We can see that the decline in turnout has been uniform throughout nearly all segments of the population. Although the coalitions are made up of the same elements proportionately as they were four years ago, they are shrinking. This is support for the decline of parties. It is sharply contrary to the idea of the voters realigning based on new ideas.

Axelrod uses the vote as his standard of measurement in describing party coalitions. Many others feel that a person's long-term psychological ties with a party are more important than the way he votes in a specific election. The rational is that a person who is a supporter of one party might still vote for the other party at times. For example, suppose we have a man who has always considered himself a Republican, and who has voted Republican in five of the last six elections, but who voted for Johnson in 1964. An Axelrod-type analysis of that voter would register him as having switched from a Republican to a Democrat and then back again. An analysis of his psychological ties would have him as a Republican the entire time. When discussing the effects of realignments and coalitions, which are long-term in nature, it might be more accurate to classify that man as a Republican, rather than as someone who has switched parties twice.

There is considerable evidence to support the idea that party preference is more stable than the presidential vote. Party affiliations are formed according to the issues of the day when one is entering the electorate. This attachment will survive long after those issues are no longer important, regardless of what new issues might arrise.[39] Two thirds of the electorate still identify with the party of the first presidential candidate that they voted for, and a majority of them have never voted for the other party in a presidential election.[40] As a person gets older, his partisan views seem to solidify.[41]

This is not to say that party preference polls are a perfect indicator. The authors of The Changing American Voter, while agreeing that party identification is stable, do not believe that it is as reliable a guide to the actual vote as it was when the American Voter studies were done.[42] It is not even certain that party identification is stable. Morris Fiorina reports that ten to fifteen percent of the electorate will shift positions on a 3-way scale (Democrat-Independent-Republican) every two years. On a seven-way scale, the figure is fourty percent every two years.[43]

Despite the fact that party preference polls are not a perfect indicator,there is still reason to believe that the coalitions can be better understood through party preference than through the actual vote. If nothing else, party preference is considerably different than the actual vote by nature. Therefore, before I can draw the conclusion that the 1980 election has not brought about any changes in the state of the coalitions, I must also analyze the present state of the coalitions according to party identification.

The party identification in 1980 for the nation as a whole, as measured by the ICPSR poll was fourty percent Democratic, thirty three percent independent and twenty four percent Republican.[44] The evolution of national party identification can be traced on graph number 1.1, on page 19. We can obsetrve that party identification has remained fairly stable over the last three presidential elections. We seem to be in the midst of a period of stabilization, similar to the period from 1936 to 1948.

Looking at the figures for the last twenty years, we see evidence for the theory that a realignment took place during the sixties. The election of 1964 does not seem to be a critical election. Although that election brought a great deal of change, those changes do not seem to be of a permanent nature. The entire period from 1960 to 1972 shows great volatility. This period may have been a period of critical realignment. The fact that stabilization has occurred from 1972 through 198. shows that those changes were of a long-term nature. The data for the last twenty years seems to sit well with the idea that we have undergone realignment in the sixties.

Expanding our scope to the entire sixty year period covered by graph 1.1, we see some striking evidence for the dealignment idea. The number of independents has risen steadily across the entire period. In only two of the last sixteen presidential elections was the percentage of independents less than in the previous election. 1980 was one of those two election years. This may be a sign that the number of independents has leveled off. It also may be a function of the current period of stabilization. Graph 1.1 is evidence that the overall strenghts of the coalitions have remained virtually the same in 1980. A look

at party identification by group will show that the coalitions are also still made up of the same groups.

A question asked in the 1980 ICPSR poll gives the respondent a list of eighteen groups and asks him(her) to pick the group that he feels closest to.[45] In table 1.7, on page 35, I have divided the respondents into the groups which they felt closest to, and given a summary of their party identification by group. "Leaning Democratic" represents the sum of those whose party identification was Strong Democrat, Weak Democrat, or Independent Democrat. The "Leaning Republican" category has been calculated similarly.

The actions of people who feel close to a group may be a strong predictor for what the group as a whole will do. This relationship was first noted in the <u>American Voter</u>: "The higher the identification of the individual to the group, the higher the probability that he will think and behaive in ways that distinguish members of his group from non-members."[46] Thus, although table 1.7 does not include all members of the groups listed, it may be representative of them.

Table 1.7 shows that the Democratic coalition of today is indeed different from the Democratic coalition of the Roosevelt era...The Democrats are still the party of the liberals, the labor unions and the poor, but there have been gains and losses. But these gains and loses were not the product of the 1980 election. Nearly all of the groups that have shifted their allegiances since the thirties started shifting some time ago. Some of them have already stabilized in their new positions. The current state of the coalitions, as analyzed by party identification,

TABLE 1.7

Groups That Tilt Democratic

Group	Leaning Dem.	Ind.-Ind.	Leaning Rep.	Size in Sample
Liberals	100.0%	0	0	1.3%
Labor Unions	100.0%	0	0	.7%
Blacks	93.2%	5.1%	1.7%	4.3%
Environmentalists	66.6%	20.0%	11.1%	3.3%
Poor	65.9%	11.0%	6.3%	9.3%
Women	60.5%	17.3%	20.9%	6.0%
Hispanics	58.4%	16.7%	16.7%	.9%
Southerners	57.1%	4.8%	38.1%	1.5%
Older People	56.9%	12.2%	28.7%	13.3%
Whites	50.0%	15.9%	34.1%	3.2%
Young People	48.6%	12.8 %	36.7%	8.0%
Working People	45.8%	14.4%	38.1%	17.4%
				Total=69.2%

Groups that tilt Republican

Group	Leaning Dem.	Ind.-Ind.	Leaning Rep.	Size in Sample
Conservatives	12.2%	7.3%	76.1%	3.0%
Business People	21.6%	4.6%	73.8%	4.8%
Moral Majority	7.7%	23.1%	69.3%	1.0%
Farmers	35.9%	7.5%	52.8%	3.9%
Middle Class	39.0%	12.3%	48.4%	17.9%
				Total=30.6%

Note: Three respondents, comprising .2% of the sample, felt closest to big business. One was a Strong Democrat, one a Weak Democrat and one a Weak Republican.

is characterized by stability, not by change.

It is no surprise to see liberals and labor ions heading the list of Democratic supporters. We see again that the blacks are an important addition to the Democratic coalition. When analized by party identification of by vote, the blacks are now very solidly Democratic. Hispanics are also on the Democratic side. This also should be no surprise. Those minorities that voted in the thirties generally voted Democratic. The trend has never changed.

The fact that those who felt closest to whites are listed as tilting Democratic should not be considered significant. Their percentage is similar to that of the nation as a whole.

The poor are still solid Democrats today, as they were in the days of Roosevelt. There are 59.6% more of them leaning towards the Democrats. This seems to go hand-in-hand with Axelrod's finding of an enormous deviation in loyalty percentage.

Most of the members of the Roosevelt coalition could be distinguished on the basis of having less wealth or lower social standing than their Republican counterparts. Since the 1960's, the Democrats have added several groups that are not based on wealth or class, but are instead proponents of specific causes. Although certain conservative, or reactionary groups have taken the Republican side, the Democrats have apparently enlisted more voters through issue grops than the Republicans have. The enormous tilt of the environmentalists towards the Democrats illustrates this point.

Although the Democrats have gained the support of many new groups, they have lost the support of some important old groups.

The most difficult group to interpret from table 1.7 is working people. Although more of them identified with the Democrats than with the Republicans, the percentage is very low for what is normally considered a Democratic group. Perhaps the key lies in what the respondents perceive "working people" to mean. The large difference between labor union identifiers and working people suggests that these are perceived to mean two different things. A very large number of respondents, 17.4%, felt close to this group. It is possible that this group draws from several different distinguishable groups.

According to the New York Times poll, the Democrats got 37% support from the managerial-proffessional class, 47% support from white collar workers and 49.5% support from blue collar workers.[47] An aggregate of these figures might account for the 45.8% support from working people in the ICPSR poll. It is interesting that the figure of 49.5% support from blue collar workers is down from 58% in 1976.[48] This seems to be one area where there is change occrring right now....

Another group that is no longer Democratic is the Southerners. The South had been a Democratic stronghold even before the Roosevelt realignment. As late as 1956, party identification in the South was heavily Democratic. In that year, the South was 67% Democratic, 16% Independent and 17% Republican.[49] In 1980, party identification in the South was only slightly more Democratic than in the nation as a whole. This leads to the same conclusion that the Axelrod data lead to, that the South is no longer a solid part of the Democratic coalition.

One explanation for the change in allegiance in the South is that many people from the North have moved there in recent

years. The authors of The Changing American Voter looked deeper into the reasons for the decline of the Democratic South. They isolated the party identification of native Southerners, and traced them across time. They found that the decline of Democratic support in the region can be attributed to migration only up to 1964. After that, the support for the Democrats declines amongst the Native Southerners as well. They conclude that the overall change in party identification would have been almost as great even if there was no migration.[50]

TABLE 1.8

PARTY IDENTIFICATION OF WHITE PROTESTANT SOUTHERNERS (1952-1972)

	1952	1956	1958	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968	1971	1972
Democrat	78%	69%	69%	61%	57%	64%	54%	50%	41%	47%
Independent	13%	16%	17%	21%	22%	21%	29%	37%	38%	35%
Republican	9%	15%	14%	18%	22%	15%	17%	13%	21%	18%

Table 1.8 trace the party identification of white Protestant Southerners.[51] Obviously, the South did not start becoming similar to the rest of the nation in 1980. The process has been going on for a long time. The fact that the South was only slightly more Democratic than the nation as a whole in 1980 must be looked at as the continuation of a thirty-year-old trend, not as a response to choices presented in 1980.

Another group that was a member of the Roosevelt coalition but is not Democratic anymore is the farmers. The farmers had been strongly pro-Democratic since the price support laws were first introduced in the 1930's. This loyalty held into the sixties,

TABLE 1.9

PARTY IDENTIFICATION OF FARMERS

	1964	1980
Democrats	64%	26.5%
Independents	9%	33.9%
Republicans	27%	35.8%

but has fallen off drastically since then. Table 1.9 shows that the farmers have gone from decidedly Democratic to decidedly Republican.[52]

The authors of the American Voter, writing when the farmers were still solidly Democratic, noticed that those from large farms were less likely to be Democrats than those from small farms.[53] This is a good clue as to what has happened since. Today, the farmer who is a sole proprietor and owns his own land is a thing of the past. Farming has become big business. This might account for the change in identification. When given only a two party choice, those in the agriculture indistry were 31% Democratic and 69% Republican.[54] The changes in the farming industry obvioulsy didn't happen overnight in 1980. They are the result of an ongoing process that started in the sixties. Along those lines, the fact that the farmers are now a Republican group has nothing to do with any choices made in 1980.

I can summarize the present state of the coalitions as follows. The Democratic coalition is still larger than its Republican counterpart. This point is not made clear in the the presidential voting statistics, but it becomes apparent when looking at party identification. Many of the groups are

still divided along class lines, as they were in the thirties. The Democrats are still the party of the poor, the labor unions and the liberals. They have been for the last fifty years. The Republicans still have the allegiances of the wealthy, the businessmen and the conservatives. This, also, has been the case for the last fifty years. The Democratic strength has been increased through the addition of several groups that were not politically important until the sixties. These groups include blacks, environmentalists and women's rights groups. Meanwhile, some of the old Democratic groups are no longer with them. The South now votes pretty much like the rest of the nation. The farmers are now a decidedly Republican force. All of these changes occurred between ten and twenty years ago.

There were no great surprises in seeing who lined up with who in 1980. Despite the wild oscillations in presidential vote totals, the allegiances of the groups are still largely the same. Just as the over-all party identification of the nation is stabilizing, so is the identification of most groups.

What all this amounts to is that the 1980 election has not changed the long-term loyalties of the nation as a whole, or of its various segments. This should refute the thought that the vote in 1980 represents a permanent majority coalition.

The Significance of Turnout and Mobilization To Coalitions

In the last section, I showed that the Democratic coalition is still considerably larger than the Republican coalition. One of the main points of this paper is that the 1980 vote had nothing to do with long-term party allegiances. The reason that the larger Democratic coalition is susceptible to losing for reasons having little do do with party allegiance is that not enough of its members vote. In 1980, the low turnout and the Democratic loss had a lot to do with each other.

The concepts of coalitions and mobilization cannot be seperated. Coalitions are built through mobilization. Only through turnout can a coalition be of any use. I have already discussed the prominent role of mobilization in the building of the Roosevelt coalition. The fact that a lower rate of turnout has become a Republican advantage is no secret.

> I don't want everybody to vote. Our leverage in the election quite candidly goes up as the voting population goes down. We have no resposibility, moral or otherwise, to turn out our opposition. It's important to turn out those who are with us.[55]
>
> -Paul Weyrich-
> Director of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress

Fourty six percent of those eligible to vote in 1980 did not do so. A comparison between these people and those that

did vote will support my clain that low turnout is a disadvantage for the Democrtas, and that this was the case in 1980.

One problem with studying non-voters is determining who they are. The percentage of respondents claiming to have voted is often much higher than the actual turnout. In the 1980 ICPSR poll, 71.4% of the respondents claimed to have voted.[56] In 1976, when turnout was only slightly higher than it was in 1980, 82.5% of the respondents claimed to have voted.[57] In sstudying the non-voters, I will go on the assumption that those who actually admitted not voting did not. I can only hope that the honest non-voters are a representative sample of all non-voters.

Table 1.10, on page 43, points out some of the differences between voters and non-voters. The party identification of non-voters is different than that of voters, as can be seen in Section A.[58] Non-voters are far more frequently independents. Less of them support each of the parties. Non-voters are also more Democratic than are voters. There are 13.9% more Democratic than Republican identifiers amongst the voters. For non-voters, there are 21.2% more Democrats.

In <u>The American Voter</u>, it was observed that turnout increases with the intensity of partisan preference, to 97% in the highest category.[59] Section B of table 1.10 shows that this relationship was still true in 1980, although the 97% figure could not be duplicated.[60]

There are other ways to look at the differences between voters and non-voters that will suggest that low turnout is a disadvantage for the Democrats. Benjamin Ginsburg points out

TABLE 1.10

CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-VOTERS

Section A

Partisanship

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Voters	41.4%	31.0%	27.5%
Non-voters	34.9%	44.9%	13.7%

Section B

Strength of Partisanship

Party ID	% voting
Strong Republican	90.5%
Strong Democrat	84.6%
Weak Republican	78.2%
Weak Democrat	67.8%
Independent-Republican	74.3%
Independent-Democrat	64.4%
Independent-Independent	51.5%

Section C

Repeat Non-voters

	voted in 1976	didn't vote in 1976	does not remember
1980 voters	93.1%	5.1%	1.8%
1980 non-voters	43.4%	49.8%	6.8%

that although partisan identification increases turnout for both high and low income groups, it increases turnout much more amongst the low income groups.[61] Members of low income groups are more likely to be Democratic. Therefore, the decline of partisan feelings in general is probably keeping home more potential Democratic voters than potential Republicans.

Another factor in turnout is education. The American Voter states that the strongest single predictor of turnout is education.[62] Ginsburg qualifies this. He does not deny the relationship, but he says that income plays a role in it. For those with a college education, turnout is high amongst all income groups. For those with just a high school education, there is 78% turnout in the high income group, and 61% turnout in the low income group. For those with an 8th grade education or less, turnout is 81% in the high income groups, and 49% in the lowest.[63] If those with less education and less income are more likely to be Democrats, then again we reach the conclusion that many potential Democrats are staying home.

Many of the points I have made about non-voters have been dependent upon a survey question (did you vote?) that we know many people lie in response to. There is another method of seperating out the non-voters. Those who are not registered to vote cannot vote As table 1.11, on page 45 shows, there are wide spread differences between those who were registered to vote and those who were not.[64] These differences lead to the same conclusion. A great many potential Democrats are staying home rather than voting.

Turnout has become the great equalizer. The Republicans overcome their smaller numbers with greater turnout. Look back

TABLE 1.11

CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE NOT REGISTERED TO VOTE

	% Carter	% Reagan
Registered Voters (71% of sample)		
most likely to vote (top 25%)	47.1%	52.9%
middle group (middle 50%)	49.9%	50.1%
least likely to vote (bottom 25%)	52.8%	47.2%
Registered Voters (71%)	49.4%	50.6%
Not registered (29%)	59.4%	40.6%

at section B of table 1.10, on page 43. For every level of partisan intensity, more Republicans turned out than Democrats. As section C of table 1.10 show, there was a high correlation between voting in 1980 and voting in 1976. (gamma of .86)[65] There are a large number of citizens consistently not voting, and a lot of them are potential Democrats. If the Democratic party cannot find a way to mobilize them better than they did in 1980, then their advantages from a larger coalition with more identifiers will be greatly diminished. The low turnout in 1980 allowed the election to be decided by factors further removed from partisanship.

Conclusions About Coalitions

The evidence has supported my claim that the 1980 election does not signify an emerging Republican majority. I have shown evidence that there has been no critical election, no realignment taking place, and no change in the partisan loyalties of the nation as a whole, or of its various segments. The 1980 election does not seem to have effected the coalitions very much.

An examination of the coalitions has found little evidence to support the theory of a proactive choice being made in 1980. When the electorate makes a decision based on new issues for the future, it will line up according to the different sides of those new issues. When the electorate is simply making a retroactive evaluation, it will vote based upon that evaluation. That evaluation, however, will not say much about where the electorate stands as far as the future is concerned. Few long term loyalties will be changed.

I have presented evidence that the state of the coalitions have not changed, at least in recent years. Of the three explanations for the current state of the coalitions that I provided, I believe that the theory of a realignment during the sixties received the most support. Many of the changes that have occurred in the coalitional bases happened, or at least began happening, during the sixties. The current lack of change in the coalitions could be explained as stabilization after the realignment. The current period of calm could also be explained as a prelude to a new realignment. There has been no evidence to refute the theory that this is a prelude. There also is no

evidence to counter the arguement that we are going through a long-term process of dealignment. The failure of the voters to make a choice between the issue positons of the two parties is in itself, support for the dealignment claim.

The three alternative explanations all have one thing in common. They could all be disproved by evidence that the public had been willing to take sides and choose a direction for the future. The evidence needed to disprove any of the explanations of the current state of the coalitions also would have been supportive of the idea of a critical election or realignment, and also would disprove my thesis. But this evidence was not present.

What the evidence does show is that the voters were not polarized, were not willing to stand behind the parties, did not really care about this election, and relatively speaking, didn't even show up for this election. Whether our current state is to be considered stabilization, prelude, or dealignment, my main point is that whatever is going on, the 1980 election has not changed it. The state of the coalitions, and all of the patterns effecting them, were the same in 1980 as they had been before. No choice has been made which would change them.

PART TWO

WHY DO PEOPLE VOTE THE WAY THEY DO?

In part one, I analyzed the election in terms of voting blocks and groups. It is difficult to study the actions of millions of people without breaking them into groups. This is especially true when members of groups tend to act alike, and the same groups tend to side with each other again and again. Although there are many things to be learned from the study of groups of voters, one must not lose sight of the individuals that make up the electorate. Nobody compels a voter to vote like other members of his race, occupation or area, and not all voters do. Each voter is free to make his own choice when he steps into the voting booth. On November 4rth, 1980, 42,951,145 voters chose Ronald Reagan, enough to elect him President.[66] In part two, I will examine why so many individuals made that choice.

I have compiled a list of the ten most frequently mentioned reasons for voting for and against each major party candidate.[67] This is listed in table 2.1, on page 49. Many of the reasons listed are personal attributes. These may be legitimate reasons for making a decision, but they are very hard to measure. They depend entirely upon the individuals perception. For instance, honesty, or dishonesty, was a popular reason for voting for and against both candidates. Some of the reasons look ahead to the future. An example is the prediction that we will have a better chance for peace with Carter. These prospective reasons are outnumbered by the retrospective reasons, such as Carter hasn't

TABLE 2.1

THE TOP TEN

Top Ten Reasons For Voting For Reagan	Top Ten Reasons For Voting Against Reagan
1. Previous record in office	1. Too old
2. Strong military position	2. Worse chance for peace
3. Better times under him	3. Campaign speeches
4. Will balance budget	4. Previous occupation
5. Honest	5. Impulsive
6. Strong/decisive	6. Dishonest
7. More conservative	7. Bad man
8. Time for a change	8. Don't like his foriegn policy
9. Like his ideas	9. Poorly informed
10. Like his economic policy	10. Inexperienced

Top Ten Reasons For Voting For Carter	Top Ten Reasons For Voting Against Carter
1.Has done a good job	1. Handled Iran poorly
2.Honest	2. Indecisive/weak
3. Has experience	3. Less income during his term
4. Will have better chance for peace	4. Cost of living higher during his term
5. Moral	5. Won't do a good job
6. Good man	6. Hasn't kept his promises
7. Has handled Iran well	7. Family
8. Will do a good job	8. Don't like his foriegn policy
9.Good for the country	9. Dishonest
10. Should have second term	10. Hasn't got results

Table 2.1(A)

percentages from table 2.1	
personal reasons	40.0%
issue-related reasons	27.5%
retrospective reasons	25.0%
predictive reasons	12.5%
general reasons	5.0%
campaign-related reasons	2.5%

kept his promises. Another group of reasons deals with issues. Objection to their foriegn policies was a reason for voting against both Carter and Reagan. It is surprising that neither the Democratic nor the Republican party is mentioned anywhere.

Table 2.1(A) summarizes the percentages for each type of reason. Some reasons fell into more than one category. For instance, Carter has handled Iran well(poorly) is both retrospective and issue-related. It is interesting to note that out of the ten retrospective reasons, six of them were reasons for voting against Carter, and three of them were reasons for voting for Carter. We will see that these retrospective evaluations played a very important role in determining the outcome of the election.

In part two, I will look at which of the reasons for voting a certain way were the most important in 1980. In the first section, I will look at the role of party identification. Party identification was not mentioned at all in table 2.1. Although it is still a major factor in every election, the evidence will show that party identification was not as important in 1980 as it has been in previous years. It certainly was not the decisive factor in 1980.

In the following section, I will look at voting based on issues and ideology. The data will show that these factors are of more importance than they have been in previous years, but may have been a nuetral factor in 1980. In the third section, I will examine voting based on retrospective evaluations. The data will support this as being the most important factor. The evidence will lead to the conclusion that voting based on retrospective evaluation of issues was the most important factor in 1980.

Issue voting based on retrospective evaluations is issue voting as Jimmy Carter's performance pertains to the issues. It has nothing to do with Ronald Reagan's promises about the issues. The Evidence that this was the most prevalent type of voting will support my arguement that no ideological choice between Reagan and Carter has been made.

Many people will vote for a candidate soley on the basis of party. As we have seen, however, the Republican party has won three out of the last four presidential elections despite the fact that there are far more Democrats. Therefore, the correlation between partisan and the vote cannot be one-to-one. In 1980, many people voted in accordance with their party identification, but not enough to secure the victory for the Democrats.

There has been debate over just how important partisanship is to the vote. The American Voter, written in 1960, made the strongest case for partisan identification being extremely important to the vote. They observed a high correlation between one's party identification and that of his parents.[68] They explained that an individual was likely to aquire a party identification early in life, from the family, and keep it for good. Attachment to a party was said to increase as one got older.[69] The stronger the attachment, the more likely one was to vote for the same party repeatedly.[70] For those who were less educated, the relationship between party identification and the vote was stronger.[71]

Many authors who have written more recently have taken the view that the relationship between partisanship and the vote is not as strong as it was proported to be in The American Voter, and is getting weaker. The most convincing such arguement was presented in The Changing American Voter. According to this work, fewer citizens have steady and strong psychological ties with a party, and party affiliation is less of a guide to

TABLE 2.2

REASONS FOR STRONG PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION

Statement	% of strong partisans who agree
1. "Ever since I can remember, I've always been a (Democrat/Republican)"	66%
2. My parents were (Democrats/Republicans) and I am too."	52%
3."I am enthusiastic about what the (Democrats/Republicans) stand for."	58%
4. "I almost always support the (Democratic/Republican) candidates."	66%
5. "I really mean that I liked (Jimmy Carter/Ronald Reagan) very much in the last election."	42%
6. "I'm a strong (Democrat/Republican) because of the way I feel about what Jimmy Carter has been doing."	34%

electoral choice. Furthermore, parties are less frequently used as standards of evaluation, and partisanship is less likely to be transferred from generation to generation.[72]

The 1980 election study reveals some interesting things

about the nature of partisan identification. I have listed some of the results in table 2.2, on page 54. The American Voter contention that two-thirds of the identifiers never cross party lines is verified by statement four.[73] The contention receives additonal support from statement one.[74] These statements are evidence that predictions of stable partisan identification hold true for about two-thirds of the strong partisan identifiers. Apparently, partisan identification is actually a retrospective evaluation for the remaining third of the partisan identifiers, judging from statements five and six.[75] If this is true, then part of the correlation between partisanship and the vote is actually due to retrospective evaluations.

The data from the 1980 election shows that the correlation between partisanship and the vote was still fairly strong in 1980. Partisanship was probably a bit stronger a predictor of the vote in 1980 than the authors of The Changing American Voter would have thought. It was probably a bit weaker than the authors of The American Voter would have thought. Section A of table 2.3, on page 56, shows the vote for each level of partisan identification.[76] Many facts are apparent. Party discipline was stronger amongst the Republicans than the Democrats. Strong identifiers stuck with the party more than did weak identifiers. The man who carried the independents won. None of this should come as a surprise.

What is surprising is the similarity between the 1980 table and the 1956 table, taken from The American Voter.[77] Although the number of independents has risen from 23% to 33% in the stretch of time between the two, those who still do identify with a

TABLE 2.3

PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND THE VOTE

Section A

	strong Dem.	weak Dem.	ind. Dem.	ind. ind.	ind. Rep.	weak Rep.	strong Rep.	
Reagan	8.6%	30.8%	26.9%	62.5%	77.4%	82.4%	96.0%	
Carter	88.2%	60.3%	50.5%	18.8%	9.7%	8.1%	1.6%	(1980)
Anderson	3.2%	8.9%	16.1%	15.0%	12.1%	7.4%	2.4%	

	strong Dem.	weak Dem.	ind. Dem.	ind. ind.	ind. Rep.	weak Rep.	strong Rep.	
Eisenhower	16%	37%	?	73%	?	93%	99%	(1956)
Stevenson	85%	63%	?	27%	?	7%	1%	

Section B

crossover voters (1980)

Democrats	27%
Republicans	10%
total	20%

crossover voters (1952-1980)

1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1972	1980
18%	17%	14%	17%	26%	27%	20%

Section C

	Reagan	Carter	Anderson
Voted for Ford in 1976	80.2%	11.0%	7.5%
Voted for Carter in 1976	26.8%	64.9%	8.1%

party nearly as often.

The strong party discipline amongst the Republicans is more surprising when one considers that Ronald Reagan is not considered a mainstream Republican. The Changing American Voter discusses the trend towards candidates being less representative of the parties, now that they can run their own campaigns. Party activists are often further from the cener than the party rank and file. The predicted result is that party members will be more oriented towards issues and particular candidates than towards the party.[78] The statistics speak against this claim. Eighty percent of the Ford voters returned to vote for Reagan, who had been Ford's opponent for nomination in 1976. The Democrats, who had the same candidate, had just 65% of their 1976 voters vote for them agian in 1980.[79] The fact that so many of Ford's voters voted for His old adversary, Reagan, along with the fact that many of Jimmy Carter's 1976 voters did not vote for him again, shows that party loyalty is situational...It is possible that party loyalty and other factors persuaded some of those Republicans who had not wanted to vote for Reagan in 1976 to do so in 1980. It is also possible that other factors outwieghed party loyalty and persuaded Democrats who had voted for Carter in 1976 not to do so in 1980. There is evidence yet to be presented that the foremost amongst those other factors was a lack of satisfaction with Jimmy Carter.

For whatever reason, many Democrats voted Republican. Because of this, and because of low turnout, the Democratic advantage in number of partisan identifiers was reduced. In table 2.4, on page 58, I have attempted to show this relationship mathematically.

TABLE 2.4

DILUTION OF THE PARTISAN VOTE

	% in this category	X	loyalty to party	X	turnout	=	% of voting identifiers
Strong Democrat	16.2%	X	88.2%	X	84.6%	=	12.1%
Weak Democrat	23.2%	X	60.3%	X	67.8%	=	9.5%
							21.6%
Strong Republican	9.8%	X	96.1%	X	90.5%	=	8.8%
Weak Republican	13.7%	X	82.4%	X	78.2%	=	8.5%
							17.3%

I have taken the percentage of the population that falls into that category of partisan identification times the percentage voting for the candidate of their prefered party times turnout in that category.[80] The result is an altered form of party identification. It shows the percent of the electiorate that identified with a party and actually voted for that party. The two additional factors reduce the Democratic advantage considerably. The results of my calculations do not mean that 21.6% of the electorate actually voted Democratic based on party identification. This means that at most, 21.6% of the electorate could have voted Democratic based on party identification, and at most 17.3% of the electorat could have voted Republican based on party identification. Taking into consideration the evidence that up to one-third of party identification may be based on retrospective evaluations, the actual number of votes based on

partisanship was probably much lower than these maximum figures. Also, remember that 71% of the respondents claimed to have voted. The actual turnout was 54%. This means that the actual percentage of partisan votes was even less.

Undoubtedly, there was some voting in 1980 based on party alone. This provides a base of support for each of the parties. I have shown that these bases of support might be much smaller, and closer to even in size than party identification might indicate. It is not these relatively few predetermined votes that provided the large margin of victory for the Republicans. It was those voters who might have voted either way, but choose to vote Republican. I must now examine why so many voters made that choice in 1980.

The Effects of Issue Voting and Ideology

It is my contention that the 1980 election does not represent a choice between the issue positions of Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. There was some issue voting present, but those who voted based on issue did not seem to favor one candidate over the other to any large extent. Issue voting seems to have been a neutral and only mildly important factor in the 1980 election.

There has been debate as to whether or not the citizens do form ideologies and vote based on issues. Some have said that the citizens are not even capable of doing so if they wanted to. The same school of thought that states that people vote mainly due to party identification believes that issue voting if fairly infrequent. Again, the classic statement of the case is found in The American Voter. They devised a simple test for issue voting, and found that very few people could pass it. They reported that one-third of the respondents were not familiar with a single issue.[81] Only twelve to fifteen percent of the electorate was credited with being able to form a coherent ideology and vote based on it.[82] The book concludes with a rather harsh judgment of the average citizen: "The typical voter has only a modest understanding of the specific issues and may be quite ignorant of matters of public policy that more sophisticated individuals might regard as very pressing."[83] Other authors, such as Michael Margolis, have since agreed with this view.[84]

Many other political scientists disagreed with these findings.

Among them was V.O. Key, who contended that "voters are not fools."[84] He denied that the electorate was "straightjacketed by socail determinants," and said that they were as rational as one could expect, given the situation.[85]

The reason for the lack of issue-voting in the years studied by The American Voter researchers was that there was a lack of issues and issue and issue differences for the public to respond to. As Gerald Pomper states, "Where there are party positions and differences, the voters can perceive them."[86] But, as Key observes, "Not every election generates group related ideas which drive a wedge through the electorate along lines easily identified by gross characteristics of the electorate."[87] Since the time when The American Voter was written, issue voting and the number of people with concrete ideologies have both increased.[87] The reason for this is simply because of more exposure to politics, and differences.[88]

The data from 1980 shows a moderately strong correlation between issue position and the vote in 1980. Table 2.5, on page 62, presents the vote by issue position for three of the more important issues of the campaign. For each issue, the respondent was asked where he would place himself on a scale from one to seven.[89] The highest percentage reached was 77.8% for Carter from those who wanted to reduce unemployment at the possible expense of inflation. Those who felt very strongly one way or another about any given issue generally tened to vote for Anderson less. There are fairly large differences between the major party candidates in the 1-2,and 6-7 ranges for every issue.

TABLE 2.5

ISSUE POSITIONS AND THE VOTE

Section A

Defense Spending

	Decrease					Increase	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reagan	13.0%	5.3%	32.1%	42.6%	52.1%	65.2%	61.9%
Carter	65.2%	84.2%	45.3%	43.9%	35.5%	28.1%	33.5%
Anderson	13.0%	5.3%	20.8%	11.5%	10.1%	6.3%	4.1%

Section B

Government Services

	reduce					no reduction	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reagan	71.0%	84.3%	68.8%	51.2%	41.5%	29.3%	24.2%
Carter	17.4%	7.4%	21.3%	38.6%	44.3%	59.3%	69.7%
Anderson	5.8%	7.4%	9.9%	8.4%	14.2%	9.8%	9.5%

Section C

Unemployment of Inflation

	reduce unemployment first					reduce inflation first	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reagan	22.2%	30.6%	44.8%	50.2%	60.4%	72.7%	72.7%
Carter	77.8%	59.2%	45.7%	39.2%	22.9%	14.5%	18/2%
Anderson	0	8.2%	9.5%	8.8%	14.6%	10.9%	3.0%

A simple way to think of candidate's ideologies is to label them left, center or right. Supposedly, when there are two center candidates, there will be a close election. This was the case in 1960, 1968 and 1976. When there is a center vs. left, like in 1972, or a center vs. right, as in 1964, the election is not supposed to be close. The public will respond to the issue differences and the center candidate will benefit. Many voters will leave the party of the outlying candidate in order to vote their issue positions.[90]

"The conclusion seems obvious: if you want to win, nominate a candidate close to the center. Or, if you must nominate a candidate far from center, hope that the other party does so as well." After stating the seemingly obvious, the authors of The Changing American Voter caution that they hesitate to draw that conclusion, because there are "several different ways to lose an election, of which issue extremity is just one."[91]

If Carter is in the center, and Reagan is on the right, then why didn't Carter win? A closer look into the matter reveals some answers.

To label a candidate right, center or left is a gross oversimplification. On a seven point scale (extremely liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, extremely conservative) Carter is generally regarded as a moderate, and Reagan a conservative. Moderate and conservative, however, are relative terms. The candidates are whatever the electorate thinks they are in relation to themselves. Therefore, the best way to find out what they really are is to ask the public. In a survey question that asked respondents to perform just such a rating, the modal figures were 6 (conservative)

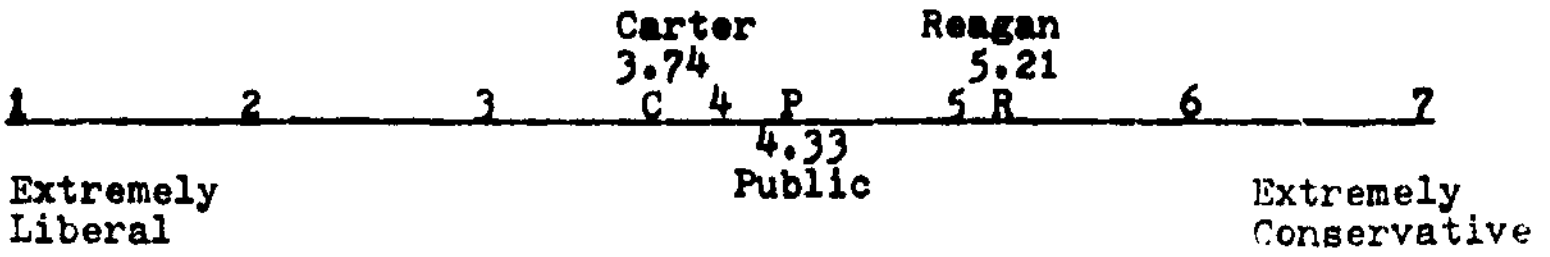
TABLE 2.6

IDEOLOGY AND ISSUE POSITION

OF THE CANDIDATES AND THE PUBLIC

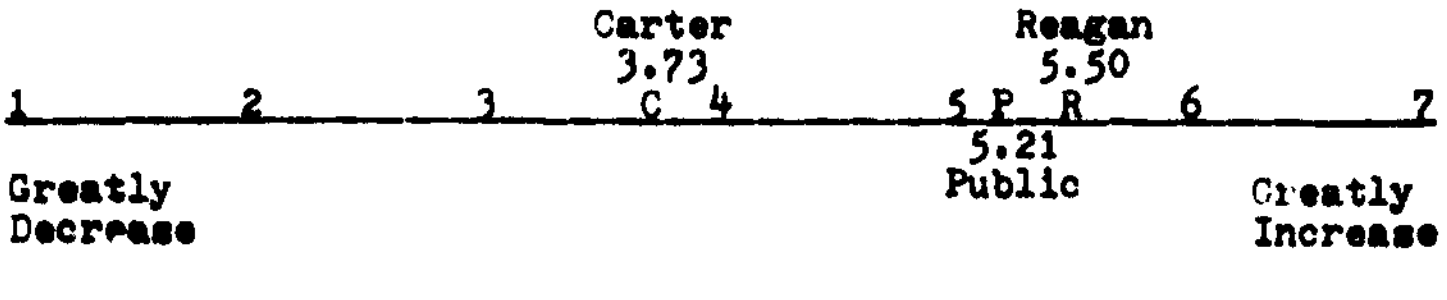
Section A

Ideology



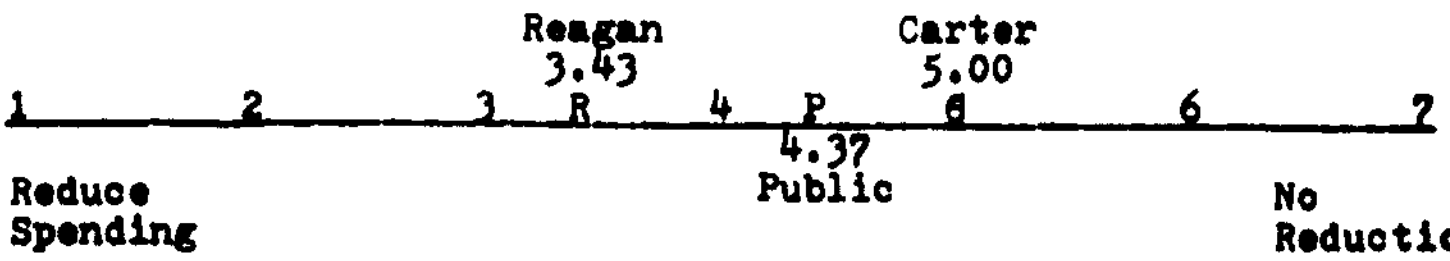
Section B

Defense Spending



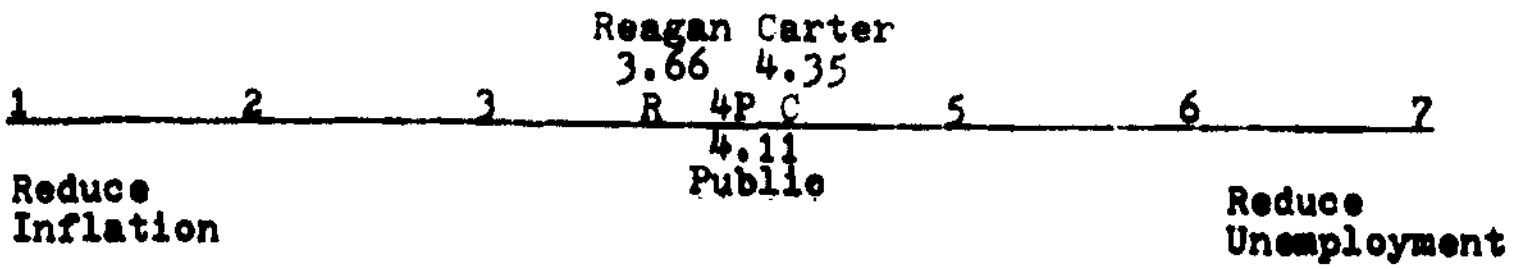
Section C

Government Services



Section D

Inflation or Unemployment



for Reagan and 4(moderate) for Carter, with the public also rating itself a 4.[92] When one takes an arithmetic average of the ratings, however, it becomes apparent that Carter is not that much closer to the center than was Reagan. The results of such averaging are shown pictorially and numerically in Section A of table 2.6. I found the results so interesting that I performed the same test for the three issues I had previously dealt with in table 2.5. Carter was only a bit closer to the public midpoint on two of the three issue, and on the third he was quite a bit further away.

Of course, these are not necessarily Reagan and Carter's real issue positions, but that is not important. Voters do not vote based on the candidates' real positions, they vote based on their perceptions of those positions. The bottom line is that Carter's position and Reagan's position each seemed about the same distance away to the public.

Carter and Reagan are not close together on any of the issues measured. Their distance from each other was apparently enough to bring out some of the issue voting evidenced in table 2.4. Since Carter was only slightly closer to the public than Reagan was, however, he probably derived only a small benefit from issue-related voting. The reasons for voting for Carter based on issue apparently were not enough to overcome the other more decisive reasons for voting against him. In the next section, I will finally get to just what those decisive reasons were.

Voting Based On Retrospective Evaluations

"The voice of the people is but an echo."
-V.O. Key

There is a school of thought amongst those who study elections that voting is simply a matter of approval or disapproval of the incumbents job during his term in office. Voters respond to the conditions they are given. If they are generally satisfied with the way things have been over the last four years, they will return the incumbent president, or the candidate of his party, for another term. If they are displeased, they will throw him out. It is my arguement that the voters were not happy with the job Jimmy Carter had done as president. This is the main reason that he no longer has that job.

The first theory of retrospective voting is generally credited to Anthony Downs.[92] Downs based his theory of voting behaivior on two precepts. The first is that voters act rationally, in their own best interest. The second is that they vote for which ever party they expect higher utility from. Downs sought to provide an explanation for exactly how a rational voter calculates which party he will derive a greater utility from:

> Since one of the competing parties is already in power, its performance (since the last election) gives him (the voter) the last possible idea of what it will do in the future, assuming its policies have some continuity. But it would be irrational to compare the current performance of one party with the expected future performance of another. For a valid comparison, both performances must take place

under the same conditions, i.e.,in the same time period. Therefore the voter must wiegh the performance that the opposition would have produced if it had been in power.[93]

Two ideas that are inherent in Down's theory are that of party continuity and party accountability. The first idea is simply the belief that a party will act in the future in a manner similar to how it has acted in the past. The second notion is that the party in power is entitled to the credit, or the blame, for the actions of its members, even if the same people are not seeking reelection.

When times are good, there is very little that a challenger can do. As V.O. Key states "...the electorate responds most markedly and most clearly to those events it has experienced and observed, vicariously or directly."[94] The voter will never trade a solid record for a promise. On the other hand, when things are not going so well, the reality of the bad times speaks largely for itself. All the challenger need do is make sure he blames the incumbent for the state of things.[95]

Over the years, certain candidates have tried to play off of the notion of party accountability, and others have tried to avoid it. Those trying to avoid it are rarely successful. For example, Lyndon Johnson made all of the references to JFK that he possibly could in 1964. Gerald Ford tried hard never to mention anything that had ever happened before 1974, but nobody had forgotten.

Section A of table 2.7 illustrates the point that Hubert Humphrey was held accountable for the actions of Johnson.

TABLE 2.7

RETROSPECTIVE VOTING

Section A

Evaluation of Johnson's Handling of Problems (1968)

	poor	fair	good
str. Dem	40%	11%	5%
weak Dem	70%	34%	23%
ind. Dem	83%	42%	23%
independ.	100%	74%	45%
ind. Rep	100%	91%	100%
weak Rep	92%	89%	87%
str. Rep	98%	98%	94%

% voting for Nixon

Section B

Evaluation of Ford's Handling of his job (1976)

	approve	disapprove
str. Dem	32%	1%
weak Dem	42%	6%
ind. Dem	45%	11%
independ.	78%	15%
ind. Rep	91%	50%
weak Rep	89%	14%
str. Rep	98%	64%

% voting for Ford

Section C

Evaluation of Carter's Handling of his job (1980)

	approve	disapprove
Reagan	18.4%	71.6%
Carter	76.3%	15.6%

Section D

Evaluation of Carter's Handling of his job (1980)

	approve	disapprove
str. Dem	97%	62%
weak Dem	79%	36%
ind. Dem	71%	37%
independ.	43%	2%
ind. Rep	42%	3%
weak Rep	42%	1%
str. Rep	29%	0

% voting for Carter

ection B of table 2.7 shows that Ford was held accountable o a much greater extent than was Humphrey.[95] In 1976, there as a difference of at least thirty percentage points between hose who approved and disapproved at every level of party dentification. This is because in 1976, Ford was not just ccountable for the actions of his party. Ford was accountable ersonally. In 1980, Jimmy Carter also had personal accountability. ection C shows that there was a tremendous difference between hose who approved of Carter and those who did not.[96] As section shows, once the reason of Party identification was removed, irtually nobody who disapproved of Carter's job as president oted for him.[97]

Approval or disapproval over specific policies and issues is also often an extremely strong predictor of the vote. Table 2.8 shows the relationship between the vote and Carter's handling of specific problems. The correlation seems to be fairly strong. It seems that issue voting in the form of retrospective evaluations of policies are a better predicter of the vote than are issues with no time frame, such as the ones presented in the previous section. This may be due to the element of personal accountability that is inherent in the retrospective evaluations.

The President of the United States not only must account for the job he does, he often bears the brunt of accountability for the entire United States Government. To many people, the President is the embodiment of the entire government. Anything that goes wrong in government will be blamed on him. The performance rating for the Presidency and for the federal

TABLE 2.8

EVALUATION OF CARTER ON NON-ECONOMIC ISSUES

AND THE VOTE

Section A

Evaluation of Carter's Handling of the Hostage Crisis

	strongly approve	not strongly approve	not strongly disapprove	strongly disapprove
Reagan	15.8%	31.8%	47.0%	72.3%
Carter	81.8%	58.0%	36.5%	17.4%

Section B

Evaluation of Carter's handling of Afganistan

	too strong	just right	not enough
Reagan	51.4%	35.4%	66.3%
Carter	37.8%	53.4%	24.9%

Section C

Evaluation of Carter's Energy Policy

	strongly approve	not strongly approve	not strongly disapprove	strongly disapprove
Reagan	13.7%	36.3%	56.8%	70.6%
Carter	84.2%	52.2%	35.4%	16.5%

government shows that the two are rated similarly. The Gamma for the two was .61.[98] The result of this is that The President is held responsible for some things that he does not have complete control over. Most notable amongst these is the economy.

The current state of the economic conditions, both of the individual voter and of the nation as a whole, is a very strong predictor of an individual's vote. People have a strong tendency

vote vote according to their pocketbook.

It is no secret that the economic indicators are always important around the time of an election. It is also no secret that the President must shoulder the blame when things go wrong. Gerald Ford complained that he had been sabotaged by the Democratic congress in 1976.[99] Richard Nixon had made the same claim in 1960. By 1972 he had learned his lesson, and was manipulating the indicators himself.[100]

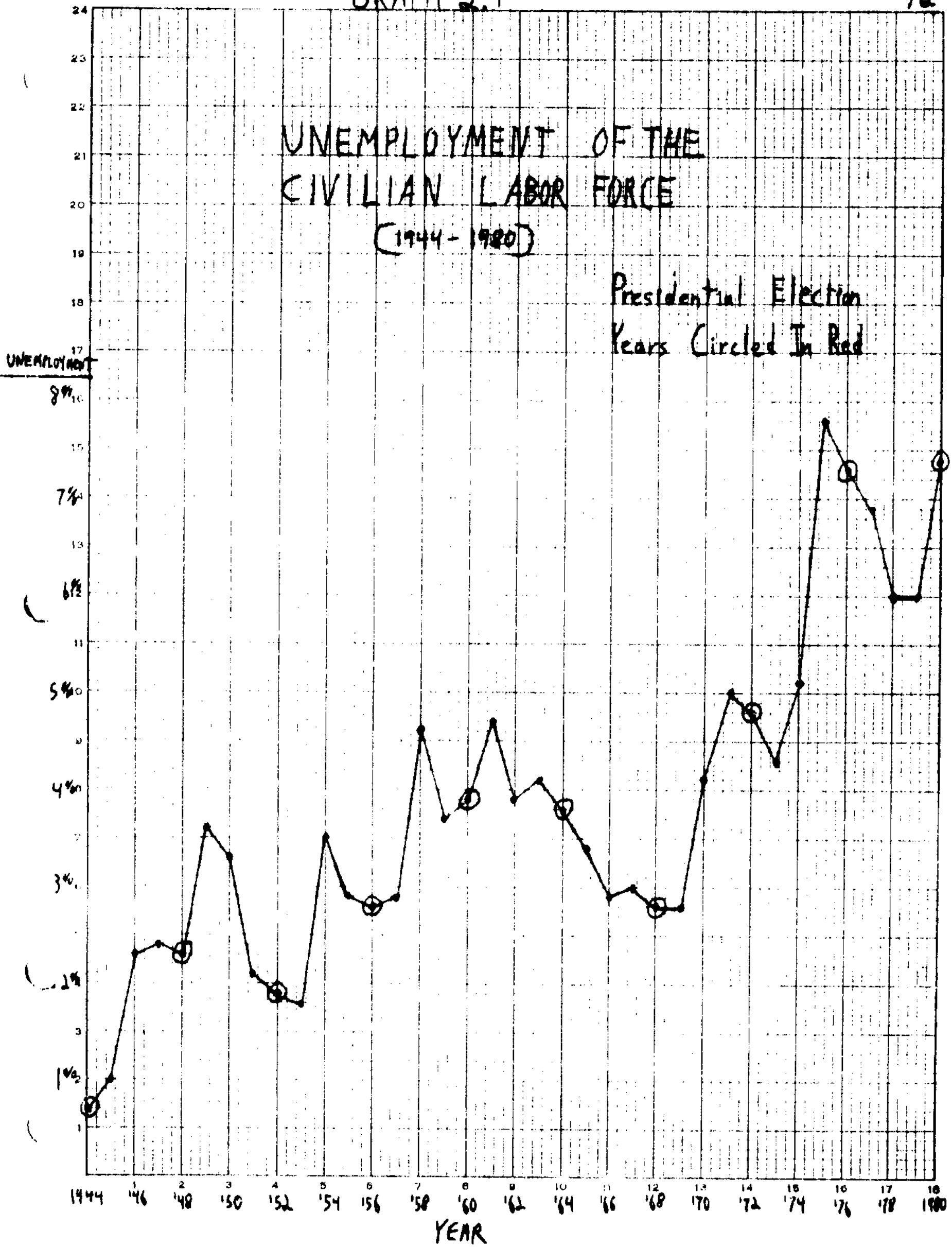
Manipulation of the economy has become regularized. Edward Tufte, in his book entitled Political Control of the Economy, identifies what he calls the political business cycle. He states that short-run spurts of economic growth in the months immediately preceeding an election will benefit incumbents.[101] For this reason, incumbents will manipulate the location and timing of economic benefits.[102] There are two identifiable symtoms to the political business cycle. Number one, there is a two-year cycle in the growth of real disposable income per capita, with accelerations in even numbered years and decelerations in odd-numbered years. Number two, there is a four-year cycle in the unemployment rate, with downturns in the months before the presidential elections.[103]

On graph 2.1, on page 72, I have charted the year-to-year changes in the unemployment rate. Presidential election years are circled. It is quite apparent that presidential elections mostly occur in the valleys, not the peaks, of the chart. In 1980, however, the unemployment rate was way up. Graph 2.2, on page 73, enlarges the section of graph 2.1 covering Jimmy Carter's term in office. Although the unemployment rate did start to come down in the months before the election, this was only

GRAPH 2.1

UNEMPLOYMENT OF THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (1944 - 1980)

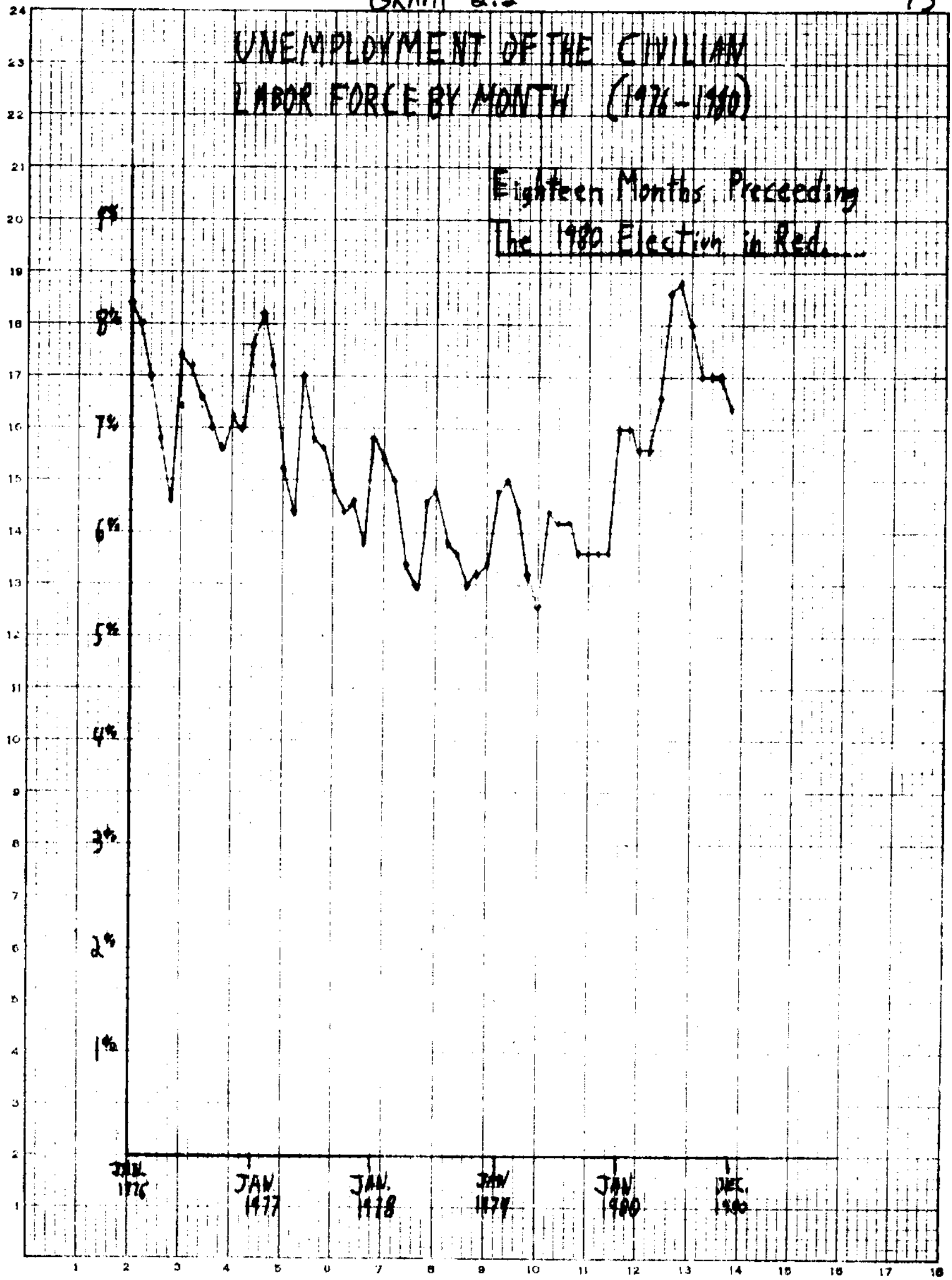
Presidential Election Years Circled In Red



GRAPH 2.2

UNEMPLOYMENT OF THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY MONTH (1976-1980)

Eighteen Months Preceding The 1980 Election in Red...



after a year and a half long upward trend. Carter's inability to control the unemployment rate, and other aspects of the economy, cost him dearly in 1980.

The relationship between the vote and retrospective evaluations of Jimmy Carter's performance in dealing with the economy is summarized in table 2.9, on page 75. A glance at section A makes it obvious that Carter was held accountable for his failure to deal with unemployment.[103] There was a difference of 65.5% in plurality for Carter between those who strongly approved of his handling of unemployment and those who strongly disapproved. There was an even greater reaction on the subject of inflation. On this subject there was a difference of 78.2% from the most favorable category to the least.[104]

Earlier in the paper, on page 64, I presented evidence that Carter and Reagan were close to equidistant from the midpoint of public opinion as to whether unemployment of inflation should be dealt with first. But, only eleven percent of the nation strongly approved of Carter's handling of unemployment, as opposed to fourty four percent who strongly disapproved.[105] On the subject of inflation, only seven percent of the public strongly approved, as opposed to fifty two percent who strongly disapproved.[106] As table 2.9 shows, there was an extremely high correlation between approval/disapproval of Carters handling of these two matters and the vote. Therefore, it seems very likely that those voting based on unemployment or inflation would have voted overwhelmingly in favor of Reagan, despite the fact that Reagan held no advantage in issue positon. This is a good example of how retrospective evaluations were more powerful than issue positions in 1980, even for those who vote based on issues.

TABLE 2.9

THE VOTE AND RETROSPECTIVE-ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS

Section A

Evaluations of Carter's Handling of Unemployment

	strongly approve	not strongly approve	not strongly disapprove	strongly disapprove
Reagan	12.2%	28.8%	59.6%	66.8%
Carter	87.8%	60.9%	29.6%	22.3%

Section B

Evaluations of Carter's Handling of Inflation

	strongly approve	not strongly approve	not strongly disapprove	strongly disapprove
Reagan	3.7%	20.7%	48.1%	70.4%
Carter	96.3%	71.9%	38.8%	18.1%

Section C

Evaluation of State of the Economy

	better	same	worse
Reagan	35.9%	26.5%	55.2%
Carter	48.7%	63.7%	35.2%

We have seen that retrospective evaluations were an extremely strong predictor of the vote. This has been true for general evaluations, evaluations according to party identification, evaluations of policies on Iran, energy, unemployment, inflation, and the economy in general. Carter met with more disapproval than approval on all of these subjects. This leaves us with a great deal of evidence to support the thesis that retrospective evaluations were the principal reason why Jimmy Carter was not reelected in 1980.

CONCLUSIONS: ACCOUNTABILITY IS THE ANSWER

While campaigning for election in 1980, Ronald Reagan made many campaign promises, and proposals. Yet, we have seen that those promises, and peoples evaluations of them, were only a minor factor in the election. The irony is that those promises made in 1980 could possibly be a larger factor in 1984, whether Reagan runs again or not. Accountability was the main factor in the 1980 election. Many people were unhappy. They were upset about Iran, the economy, and about many other things. In 1980, as in Harry Truman's day, the buck still stopped in the oval office. Jimmy Carter was held accountable for the nation's problems, and the electorate's lack of satisfaction over the way he dealt with them.

If accountablility was the main factor in the 1980 election, then Jimmy Carter, not Ronald Reagan, was the most important man. We have seen that many people did not have an opinion on Reagan's proposal for a tax cut. Far fewer had no opinion on Carter's handling of Iran, or inflation. The people formed their opinions of Carter, and they voted based on them.

There were other factors in the 1980 election besides retrospective evaluations of Carter, but for one reason or another none were as powerful. Party affiliation was still a factor. Despite the decline of support for the parties, and the rise of independents, party affiliation is still a potentially strong enough factor to swing an election by itself. But, the effect of party affiliation is direclty related to turnout. In a year when turnout was quite a bit higher than it was in 1980, party

affiliation alone might still give a Democratic president elected. The turnout simply was not present in 1980. There always seems to be more crossover votes amongst the the Democrats. Retrospective evaluations undoubtedly pulled even more Democrats over.

The decline of parties and the rise of retrospective voting are related. Independents are the most likely to be retrospective voters. In that respect, the continuing decline of parties was important in 1980. With less people than ever considering party identification as a major criteria, retrospective evaluations are bound to become more important.

It is far more difficult to vote prospectively than it is to vote retrospectively. After all, a prospective vote is based on a guess of what the future will bring. A retrospective vote looks ahead to the future based on the certainty of past experience. It is apparent that the rise in issue voting is also related to the rise of retrospective voting. Prospective issue voters must first guess what the issues will be, then guess which side will serve them better. A retrospective issue voter votes based on a certainty that his opinion on the issue did or did not coincide with the actual policy of the incumbent. In a sence, retrospective voting is a more logical form of issue voting.

If issue voting was important in the 1980 election, in the form of retrospective evaluations of the issues, than Ronald Reagan had nothing to do with those issue choices. The form of the issue voting was approval or rejection of Jimmy Carter's policies. In an election where retrospective issue voting was the important factor, and the incumbent was reelected, there would

be a clear mandate for him to continue his policies. The defeat of the incumbent in an election where retrospective evaluations were most important holds no such clear message. The policies of the incumbent were unpopular. One cannot say that this means that an issue choice has been made in favor of the challenger. In the case of the 1980 election, there is no evidence to support a claim that the electorate responded to Ronald Reagan's proposals. They only rejected Jimmy Carter's efforts.

The 1980 election will not be remembered as the beginning of a new Republican era, unless many changes occur before 1984. There were no major coalitional shifts, no realignments. There was no clear choice made, and no mandate handed out. What there was was a lack of satisfaction over the way that one man handled his job. That man was fired.

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[12]Pomper (1981), p. 75

[13]Burnham (1978), p. 106

[14]ICPSR, V1392

[15]Nie et al. p. 213. This question was not asked in the same form as was the question in the ICPSR poll. This might account for part of the difference in the scores.

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